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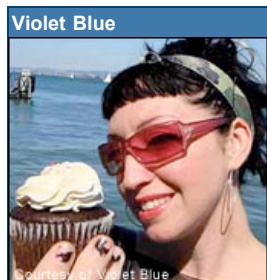
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## Best Cities For Singles

# San Fran's Sexy Solo Scene

Violet Blue 08.21.07, 6:00 PM ET



The verdict is in: San Francisco is the No. 1 U.S. city for singles. But I could have told you that even without Forbes.com's imprimatur. Endowed with a cinematic cityscape, a magnetic economy and the most sexually tolerant population this side of Amsterdam, the City by the Bay is perfectly conducive to solo satisfaction.

So what was I doing looking for love in Safeway on a Saturday night?

Well, the Marina Safeway isn't just any grocery store. It's a legendary local pickup spot for the upwardly mobile straight set, immortalized in Armistead Maupin's iconic *Tales of the City*. Today Marina Safeway regulars share tips online on how to find a date in the produce section. I was here as part of a mission to sample the more unique aspects of San Francisco dating. Sure, the city bristles with top-notch cuisine and stylish bars. But it's the quirks that make it special.

So in the interest of research, a girlfriend and I hit the Marina Safeway in search of more than a late-night snack. During a giggly tour of the melon aisle, we met a tall cutie in a Berkeley sweatshirt. He probably thought he was seeing double, with our matching black hair, glasses, red lipstick and blushing smiles. I surrendered him to my girlfriend. Score one, Safeway.

The next stop on my experimental tour was the San Francisco version of speed dating. We get all the usual dating fads here, but with a local twist. Speed dating has morphed into The Crush Lab, billed by its creators as "A Twisted Twist on Singles' Nights." Curious about their "Connectatron 9000" match-making computer, I followed their Web site's instructions and sent in a photo and a link to my profile on a social networking site.

I made the cut and arrived at their lair to find between 40 and 50 singles mingling around a Tiki bar. Every half-hour we participated in a round of speed dating, and the evening culminated with a faux first date--a short movie with popcorn. I left covered with stickers from flirty men and had three potential dates for the following weekend. Score

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three, Crush Lab.

So, suppose you've firmed up a date with the object of your attraction. There's always dinner and a movie, but I opted to take a hot date to kissing class.

Run by the Center for Sex and Culture, the classes are hugely popular: When I called with a week to spare, I was put on a wait list. We got in at the last minute.

The class was held at sex toy retailer Good Vibrations. As if a trip to a sex shop wasn't exciting enough, the lights were low, the music was wordless and soft, and the teacher gave us water to keep our lips lubricated. I was nervous. Not just about kissing my date, but also because we were in a room full of other couples expected to do the same. Would we be watched? Judged?

Within minutes the instructor has us all relaxed and giggling. Our first task was to pass a playing card from pucker to pucker with our dates, an exercise that grew more flirty and hilarious with each missed pass of the queen of hearts. Ten minutes later we paired off and attempted guided exercises that began with touching each other's faces, and continued with giving and receiving kisses with different techniques.

At some point I decided I'd be more comfortable sitting on my date's lap to get my smooches right. I looked around the room, only to see a sea of people too busy locking lips to notice anything going on around them. Nearly two hours later, I wondered where the time went. And how soon I could get my date back home for more practice, never mind my aching lips. Score ... well, let's just say it was the kind of date that makes San Francisco worth living in.

*Violet Blue* is the author of 20 books on sex and sexuality as well as a blogger, podcaster and sex columnist for The San Francisco Chronicle.

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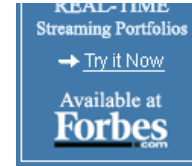
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